

STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR

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Governor, EPD Ease Outdoor Water Use Schedules

Governor's Mansion landscape is example of efficient irrigation, best management practices

ATLANTA – Governor Perdue announced today that due to significant rainfall and improved water supplies the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has issued a non-drought schedule for outdoor water use for the first time since June 2006.

“Georgians have seen the most severe drought on record, and have proven their ability to conserve and manage our state’s most precious resource,” said Governor Perdue “We have become more educated about water conservation, and have taken significant steps towards ensuring a long term solution. I believe Georgians will continue to use our water resources wisely under this new outdoor watering schedule.”

Under a non-drought schedule, outdoor water use is allowed three days a week on assigned days using odd and even-numbered addresses. Odd-numbered addresses can water on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Even-numbered and unnumbered addresses are allowed to water on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Water use may occur at any time of the day on the assigned days, however landscape watering is discouraged between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m because of its limited effectiveness.

The change in the state’s drought response was announced at a meeting of the State Drought Response Committee. It is the first change since May 2008 when 55 north Georgia counties were under a level four drought response, which prohibits most types of outdoor water use. Middle Georgia counties were assigned a level two response, which limits water use to three days a week midnight to 10 a.m. South Georgia counties, including the coastal region, followed a level one drought response schedule, which allows watering three days a week midnight to 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to midnight.

Overall, north Georgians averaged monthly water savings of about 15 percent since November 2007. These reductions come from citizens and Georgia businesses implementing a variety of conservation measures, including *waterSmart* landscape principles and selecting more efficient indoor fixtures and devices. Georgia’s collective vision for water efficiency is presented in the recently released Water Conservation Implementation Plan (WCIP). Through the goals and practices identified in that plan we can expect to continue to progress toward greater long-term water efficiency. To get more information on *waterSmart* landscape principles and the Georgia WCIP, visit www.conservewatergeorgia.net.

“We have just lived through one of the worst droughts in Georgia history, and citizens should be applauded for the great job they have done conserving water,” said Carol A. Couch, EPD Director. “The decision to ease outdoor watering restrictions should not be seen as a license to waste water, but as a vote of confidence in Georgians ability to conserve and use water efficiently.”

Large water systems and local governments producing more than 100,000 gallons of water per day in the former level four drought response area must continue to file monthly water use reports. Should water supplies drop and drought conditions reappear, steps will be taken quickly to toughen water use schedules again.

Today, Governor Perdue also announced the use of a new drip irrigation system at the Governor’s Mansion. The Georgia Green Industry Association (GGIA) and its members partnered with the Governor and mansion staff to landscape the front portion of the Governor’s Mansion. During discussions regarding the efficiencies of drip irrigation, the idea arose to demonstrate the efficient irrigation and best management practices in the landscape. Governor Perdue has been a staunch supporter of the green industry during Georgia’s historic drought and has always been a proponent of water conservation. The mansion grounds proved the perfect stage to demonstrate that not only was it okay to plant again in Georgia but that sustainable landscape projects don’t have to use a lot of water.

“The Governor’s Mansion is now a showplace for water conservation,” said Governor Perdue. “The garden will be a lasting testament to the environmental benefits and beauty that a properly designed and efficient landscape can bring to all Georgians.”

The green industry in Georgia is a leading segment of agriculture. Prior to the drought, economic impact of the industry was estimated to be in excess of \$8 billion annually with over 75,000 Georgians employed by nursery growers, landscape firms, garden centers, greenhouse operators, irrigation contractors and allied suppliers. GGIA volunteered materials, labor and their expertise to make the mansion project a full-blown success. Special attention was given to water efficiency and sustainability. Every aspect of the project served as a model for practices that would not only create a beautiful landscape to showcase Georgia grown products, but would do so while using minimal water resources.

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